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WEST VIRGINIA

Bulletin on the Common School

Diploma. January, 1912.



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STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA, *State dept*
DEPARTMENT OF FREE SCHOOLS *of*
CHARLESTON *educator*

BULLETIN
ON THE
COMMON SCHOOL DIPLOMA

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BULLETIN ON THE COMMON SCHOOL DIPLOMA.

LEGAL PROVISION.

The school law prescribes definitely the courses of study that shall be pursued in the free schools of the state and makes further provision for the granting of diplomas to such pupils as complete satisfactorily a prescribed course of study. Twenty-five thousand copies of the manual containing the courses of study have been distributed among the teachers and school officers of the state and abundant material to enable the teachers to carry out the said courses of study has been provided so that it can be safely said that there is no valid reason why every teacher in the state should not be following the prescribed course of study.

The sections of the school law relating to these matters are given herewith.

Section 78. In the free schools there shall be taught reading, orthography, penmanship, arithmetic, English grammar and language, United States history, state history, general and state geography, civil government, general history, book-keeping, elementary agriculture, and physiology and hygiene, and in connection therewith the nature of alcoholic drinks and narcotics, with special instruction as to their effect upon the human system, and in addition thereto in graded and high schools such other

subjects as may be required in the course of study prescribed by the state board of education.

Section 79. It shall be the duty of the state superintendent of free schools to prepare and distribute a manual containing the courses of study prescribed by the committee on course of study and such other matter as may seem necessary to enable teachers to carry out the said courses of study, and his further duty to see that the teachers in all the various schools follow the course of study so prescribed; he shall also provide for the examination and graduation of pupils who satisfactorily complete the said course of study, and shall issue diplomas thereto.

KINDS OF DIPLOMAS.

Elementary. This diploma may be secured by passing a satisfactory examination on the following subjects:

Reading

Orthography

Penmanship

Arithmetic

English grammar and language

United States history

State history

General and state geography

Civil government

Elementary agriculture

Physiology and hygiene

Graded School. This diploma may be se-

cured by passing the examination in the eleven subjects named above and in addition thereto the subjects of General history and Book-keeping.

The amount of preparation expected in each subject is indicated in the manual containing the courses of study. Since each county has its own list of text books the questions to be used cannot be prepared with reference to any particular set of books. However, for examinations held after July 1, 1912 the questions will be based to some extent upon the uniform text books which will be used throughout the state after that date.

VALUE OF COMMON SCHOOL DIPLOMA.

There is little danger that the value of the common school diploma will be over-estimated. The fact is, that it has been sadly neglected in many sections of the state in the past and many golden opportunities to give an uplift to the lives of boys and girls have been lost.

Many pupils drop out of school on account of a lack of interest in their studies, and this lack of interest usually results from a lack of definiteness of purpose and of aim. In most cases the teacher is to blame for this but in many other instances the parents are largely responsible. If our country schools were carefully graded and a common school diploma held up as a prize to be won at the end of the course many boys and girls would be led to find their talents and capacities, and their lives

would count for much more in the world than they do now. They would be led to advance step by step without a waste of energy or effort if they could see indications of regular and definite progress.

The honor and distinction of receiving a diploma issued by the state is a valuable stimulus to the ambition of boys and girls. Many boys and girls have been led to lives of the highest profit and usefulness because their ambition was aroused at the right time since this comes at an age when they are most impressionable. The lives of many are lost in obscurity and oblivion who could have been of great service and usefulness if the right impulses and motives could have been influenced when that influence was most needed. Unfortunately many fine young people are described in the words of the poet.

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

Furthermore, the common school diploma should be an effective means in the hands of county and district superintendents and teachers of creating high school sentiment in the communities in which they work. Pupils should be led to regard the diploma not as an indication of a convenient stopping place in their school work but they should regard it as a certificate of proficiency showing that they are qualified to enter upon the very important

period of training which follows the eight grades of work in the common school. If we can implant in the more promising boys and girls in every district a desire to go to high school and arouse in their parents a desire to have them go, it will not be long until practically every district in the state will have its high school. Nothing more important than this for the future welfare of the state and its citizens can be done.

DATES AND PLACES FOR HOLDING EXAMINATIONS.

In 1912 the dates for the examination are as follows:

(1) Thursday and Friday, Feb. 29th and March 1st.

(2) Thursday and Friday, May 9th and 10th.

The county superintendent at his option may hold examinations on either or both of the above dates but it will be impossible for him to arrange for examinations at any other time. It is also his duty to determine at how many places in the county the examinations will be held. Usually, the examinations are held in each district or at such central points as will accommodate the greatest number of pupils. It is not necessary for the examinations to interfere with the regular work of the school, and under no circumstances should the school be dismissed for the purpose of holding the examinations. If the teacher of the school at which an examination is to be given cannot

conduct the examination, it would be well for the county superintendent to arrange for some capable and trustworthy citizen to take charge. The county superintendent should find out considerably in advance of the examination just where the pupils are who desire to take the examinations and arrange suitable places accordingly. In no case should a pupil be deprived of the privilege of taking the examination on account of the distance or inaccessibility of the place of the examination.

SUGGESTED PROGRAM.

The following program has been prepared in the hope that it will be of some service to county superintendents and teachers in conducting the examinations. It may be advisable to change the program slightly in a few instances to adapt it to the local conditions, but in most cases some such program as the one given below will be found helpful.

Thursday.

9:00—10:00.....	Geography
10:00—10:30.....	Spelling
10:30—10:45.....	Recess
10:45—12:00.....	Grammar

Noon Intermission.

1:00—2:00.....	Reading
2:00—2:45.....	Civil government
2:45—3:00.....	Recess
3:00—3:45.....	State history
3:45—4:30.....	Bookkeeping.

Friday.

9:00—10:30.....	Arithmetic
10:30—10:45.....	Recess
10:45—12:00.....	U. S. history

Noon Intermission.

1:00—2:00.....	Agriculture
2:00—2:30.....	Penmanship
2:30—2:45.....	Recess
2:45—3:30.....	Physiology
3:30—4:15.....	General history.

GRADUATING EXERCISES.

The plan of holding graduating exercises for those who complete the work of the common schools cannot be commended too highly. In some places last year exercises were held at the county seat for all the graduates of the county; in others, the exercises were held by districts and in some cases interesting exercises were held for different schools.

These exercises whether they be for the county, district or individual school, are instrumental in emphasizing the importance of the work of the common schools, and in arousing interest in at least a common school education for every child. This is especially true in rural communities where school opportunities are frequently too limited. They furnish excellent opportunities for stimulating the proper activity by not only providing for but insisting

on the best degree of public school education within their possibilities for every boy and girl in the state. The young people who receive these diplomas are in that period of life where the impressions they receive are most lasting. Many men and women who have achieved success have done so because of the inspiration and encouragement received on such occasions. The program should provide for some of the best music that can be secured in the county. The speaker for the occasion should be one who will bring a word of encouragement for what the pupils have done, one who has a clear and intelligent vision of the possibilities that lie before these boys and girls and one who has the power to make them see that vision. He should lead them to know their privileges for continuing their education and help them to see that what they have so far accomplished is just a beginning of what they need and what they are entitled to.

If the number of graduates is not large, it would be well for each graduate to give a prepared speech or read a paper. In either event the subject should be one within the pupil's own range of experience and the work should be entirely original. These speeches and papers should be brief. If the number of graduates is too large for all to appear on the program, a number should be chosen to represent the class.

GENERAL REGULATIONS.

Passing Grades. At a conference of county superintendents at Charleston in January, 1911, it was decided that the passing grade should be an average of 80 per cent. with no grade below 65 per cent. in any subject.

Grading. The grading of the manuscripts is to be done by the county superintendent and two or more assistants appointed by him if he desires them. The persons appointed should be of well known character and ability and their names should be published in the county papers so that the general public may know by whom this work is done.

In the matter of grading great care should be exercised. If the grading is too close and severe, it will be discouraging to both the pupils and their teachers and will chill the ambitions and hopes of the boys and girls. On the other hand if it is too lenient, the efficiency of the whole system will be lowered and these diplomas will be worthless.

The graders should not be too technical, watching for small mistakes and overlooking the broad general grasp of a subject that a pupil may have, yet no pupil should be given a diploma who is notably deficient in these things. Before pupils can expect to receive diplomas they should be able to write good clear English in a legible hand and show definite and certain knowledge of the subjects on which they are being examined. Under no

circumstances should any pupil's manuscripts be graded by his own teacher.

Credit For Former Examinations. If the pupil takes both examinations in an examination year he may have the credit for the highest grades in both examinations at the option of the county superintendent. Also at the option of the county superintendent pupils may receive credit for grades made in examinations previous to this year, if these grades have been properly recorded.

SUGGESTIONS TO PUPILS.

The following data should be written at the top of each sheet:

- (a) Name of pupil
- (b) Name of subject
- (c) Name of school
- (d) Date

2. Write on one side of the paper only.
3. Number the answers to correspond to the questions.
4. All manuscripts should be written with ink.
5. In arithmetic complete solutions should be given.
6. No two pupils taking the examinations should sit at the same desk.
7. Pupils should not be permitted to leave the room or communicate with any one except the person conducting the examination.

8. Pupils should not ask the examiner to explain or give information or opinions about questions. Any reasonable interpretation of the questions will be accepted.

9. Pupils should not be permitted to use books, notes or helps of any kind.

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